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SUBJECT: SLOVAKIA - WOMAN OF COURAGE NOMINATION

REF: STATE 12871

¶1. Post nominates Andrea "Basa" Buckova for the International Woman of Courage award. Buckova is a Romani activist, former political candidate, and currently works for a regional branch of the Plenipotentiary for Romani Affairs. She can be contacted at (work tel) 421-48-414-8552, (mobile tel) 421-905-740-849, (email) andrea.buckova@vlada.gov.sk, or (mailing) c/o Kulturne Zdruzenie Romov Slovenksa, Na Hrbe 16, 97401 Banska Bystrica, Slovakia.

¶2. As a long-term activist, Buckova has helped to improve the condition of the Romani minority and build bridges between the ethnic Slovak and Romani communities. She serves as the Director of the non-profit Cultural Association of Roma in Slovakia. Buckova is also a member of the "Banska Bystrica Alternative", a loose grouping independent political candidates in the central Slovak city of Banska Bystrica, population 80,000. In December 2006, Buckova ran for city council. She was the sole ethnic Romani candidate in a city that has never elected a Rom. Only 83 votes shy of joining the city council, she is now the second alternate. After extensive campaigning, Buckova received the majority of her votes from non-Romani citizens, busting the myth that non-Roma would not vote for a Romani candidate in Slovakia. Through her courage to fight stereotypes and biases, Buckova developed a network of contacts that enables her to promote an agenda of equality even without winning a city council seat. In her everyday job, Buckova helps the Romani community of Banska Bystrica as the Regional Coordinator for the Plenipotentiary for Romani Affairs. She graduated from Nitra University with a Masters degree in Romani studies and spent several years as a social worker.

¶3. As is the case for most economically and socially underprivileged groups, Romani women suffer from lower rates of education, literacy, and employment than the men. Buckova's efforts, however, have not focused solely on women, but rather on reaching across ethnic Slovak-Romani boundaries and helping an entire segment of society. To invert Secretary Rice's statement that "the advance of women's

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rights and the advance of human liberty go hand in hand," Buckova's work towards the advance of human liberty and dignity goes hand in hand with the advance of women's rights.

¶4. Post's coordinator for women's issues is Political Officer Tanya Spencer. She can be reached at 421-2-5922-3277 or spencertk@state.gov.
VALLEE